NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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SENATE FISHES IN TROUBLED WATERS

ANNCR:

NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN DISCUSSES A SENATE VOTE ON A BILL THAT WOULD CREATE A TWO-HUNDRED MILE FISHING ZONE OFF UNITED STATES COASTS.

VOICE:

FOR MANY YEARS -- MORE THAN TWENTY, IN FACT -- THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER MARITIME STATES HAVE BEEN URGING THAT THE WORLD'S NATIONS CODIFY THEIR LAWS OF THE SEA IN A SINGLE INSTRUMENT. THE THESIS OF THE U.S., THE SOVIET UNION, BRITAIN AND OTHER MARITIME POWERS HAS BEEN ALL ALONG THAT THE SEA'S RESOURCES ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMICS OF ALL NATIONS -- BUT PARTICULARLY THOSE WHICH HAVE DEVELOPED INDUSTRIES TO EXPLOIT THEM.

THE WORLD, REPRESENTED BY ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR NATIONS, HAS SUBSTANTIALLY COME AROUND TO AGREEMENT ON THE NEED FOR FAIR LAWS TO MAKE THE RESOURCES OF THE WORLD'S SEAS AVAILABLE TO ALL ON AN EQUITABLE BASIS. BUT THIS UNIVERSAL RECOGNITION OF THE PRINCIPLE HAS NOT SO FAR MOVED THE NECESSARY STEP FURTHER -- THE WRITING OF A COMPREHENSIVE LAW OF THE SEA. THE ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR NATIONS WILL TRY ONCE MORE THIS YEAR TO TAKE UP THE THREADS OF THEIR DELIBERATIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE SEA. THEY HAVE WORKED ON IT INCONCLUSIVELY AT VARIOUS SUCH MEETINGS -- MOST RECENTLY IN 1974 IN CARACAS.

A COMPREHENSIVE LAW OF THE SEA GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES WOULD ELIMINATE OR AT LEAST REDUCE SUCH TENSION-PRODUCING INCIDENTS AS THE CURRENT "COD" WAR BETWEEN ICELAND

AND BRITAIN, AND THE PERENNIAL SEIZURE BY SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS OF AMERICAN TUNA FISHING VESSELS. THE LONG-HELD VIEW IN WASHINGTON IS THAT THE LACK OF AN OVER-ALL LAW OF THE SEA ONLY PROVOKES UNILATERAL ACTION BY NATIONS AND FISHERMEN ANXIOUS TO PROTECT THEIR ECONOMIC INTERESTS.

JUST HOW VALID THIS ARGUMENT IS WAS SHOWN YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES ITSELF. THAT BODY VOTED BY A DECISIVE MAJORITY TO EXTEND THE PRESENT TWELVE MILE FISHERIES ZONE OFF UNITED STATES COASTS TO TWO HUNDRED MILES. SPONSORS OF THE LEGISLATION MAINLY REPRESENT EAST COAST STATES WHOSE FISHERMEN HAVE SEEN THEIR FISHING GROUNDS DEPLETED BY FOREIGN VESSELS OVER-FISHING THOSE WATERS. THE LEGISLATION WAS APPROVED OVER THE OBJECTIONS OF PRESIDENT FORD, BUT ITS SPONSORS SAID IF ENACTED BY THE WHOLE CONGRESS, IT WOULD BE SUPERSEDED BY A LAW OF THE SEA THAT TOOK INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERESTS THE SENATE BILL WAS DESIGNED TO PROTECT.

AND THE LEGISLATION AS WRITTEN BY THE SENATE BOUGHT TIME FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON A NEW WORLD SEA LAW SCHEDULED FOR NEW YORK IN MARCH TO COME UP WITH A WORKABLE FORMULA TO PROTECT COASTAL STATES FROM OVER-FISHING OF THEIR WATERS BY OTHER STATES. THE SENATE BILL, IF RECONCILED WITH A SIMILAR MEASURE PASSED BY THE HOUSE LATE LAST YEAR, WOULD NOT GO INTO EFFECT UNTIL MID-1977.

THE AMERICAN LEGISLATION DIFFERS IN AN IMPORTANT FEATURE FROM OTHER MEASURES TAKEN BY SOME SOUTH AMERICAN, AFRICAN AND OTHER COASTAL NATIONS WHICH HAVE PROCLAIMED TERRITORIAL SEAS OF UP TO TWO HUNDRED MILES. THE AMERICAN LEGISLATION LIMITS

ITSELF TO SETTING UP A FISHERIES ZONE. IT DOES NOT EXTEND THE TERRITORIAL SEA WHICH AT PRESENT IS THREE MILES.

(OPT) INCIDENTALLY, THE DEBATE IN BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS ON EXTENDING AMERICAN FISHING RIGHTS SHOWED A SHARP DIVISION BETWEEN WEST AND EAST COAST FISHERMEN. THE WEST COAST TUNA INDUSTRY OBJECTED TO THE HOUSE AND SENATE BILLS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THEY WOULD WEAKEN THEIR STAND THAT THEY HAVE A RIGHT TO FOLLOW THE SCHOOLS OF TUNA THAT PERIODICALLY VISIT THE WATERS OFF SOUTH AMERICA'S WEST COAST TO WITHIN THE TWO HUNDRED MILE ZONE PROCLAIMED BY ITS COASTAL NATIONS. BUT THE VOTES IN BOTH HOUSES SHOWED THAT OPPONENTS OF THE LEGISLATION WERE IN A MINORITY, AND THAT THE MAJORITY SAW THE DANGER OF OVER-FISHING OF AMERICAN WATERS AS THE GREATER EVIL. (END OPT)

IN ANY CASE, THE SENATE ACTION-WHILE NOT FINAL AT THIS STAGE -- SERVES TO DRAMATIZE ONCE MORE THE URGENT NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE LAW OF THE SEA FAIR TO ALL INTERESTED NATIONS.

GH/RCS